

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Sanford Bishop yesterday backed a bipartisan Farm bill that invests in improved nutrition, conservation, renewable energy and farm programs.

“This bill will help producers of all commodities stay on the land they hold and love, and encourage conservation of natural resources and land for use by future generations,” said Congressman Bishop. “Many of the needs of Southwest Georgia are addressed by this bill. The peanut rotation program, which we paved the way for in the House bill last summer, will bring peanut growers into the next generation of agriculture by encouraging a cleaner, greener method of planting while ensuring an affordable and accessible supply to the markets that rely on U.S.-grown peanuts.”

Struggling farmers will receive much needed aid from the legislation. The Farm bill also reforms disaster assistance to make it a permanent, paid for program for farmers with crops stricken by natural disasters such as drought and flood.

Nearly three-fourths of the Farm bill will support nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. The legislation also boosts conservation programs that reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters.

Under the bill, farmers will play a greater role in fueling our energy independence. The Farm bill invests \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources. It takes another critical step in transitioning biofuels beyond corn to non-food crops and sources such as switchgrass, woodchips and corn stalks.

Despite the reforms to farm programs within the bill and the critical programs funded by this long-worked for legislation, President Bush has threatened a veto.

“This bill represents meaningful compromise on behalf of the lawmakers to whom this legislation is most important, meets the White House demands by more than half way, and means billions of dollars to not just rural America, but to people living in every corner of this country,” said Congressman Bishop. “If we can spend billions of dollars fighting a war and rebuilding another country – including supporting that country’s land use and agriculture programs – I think we ought to be able to find it within our means here in Congress to support American agriculture.”

The following is a summary of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008:

The conference report on the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 makes historic investments in our food and farm economy. The bill will expand food security programs, protect our vital natural resources, promote healthier foods and local food networks, and reform commodity and biofuel programs to reflect the priorities of the nation.

### **Ensuring Food Security**

- Nutrition programs increased by \$10.361 billion with appropriate benefit increases that are indexed to the cost of living

- Vital assistance to food banks increased by \$1.25 billion
- New funding boosts organic agriculture, fruit and vegetable programs, and local food networks
- Country-of-origin labeling for meat and produce made mandatory

### Promoting Homegrown Renewable Energy

- Provides \$1.1 billion to fund programs that will help the renewable energy industry invest in new technologies that use a variety of sources beyond feed grains.
- Corn ethanol tax credit reduced and redirected to incentives for cellulosic ethanol
- Creates a loan guarantee program and a program to encourage and develop production of dedicated energy crops
- Bioenergy research increased and renewable energy programs expanded

### Reforming Farm Programs

- Farm program safety net extended and modernized, with an updated adjusted gross income means test for commodity programs
- Farm and conservation program transparency increased, with direct attribution of payments and the ending of practices that result in multiple payment eligibility
- Crop insurance reformed to prevent windfall reimbursements to crop insurance companies
- Budgeted standing disaster assistance program for crops stricken by catastrophic natural disasters such as drought and flood

### Protecting the Environment

- Conservation program spending increased by \$7.9 billion
- Doubles funding for the Farm Protection Program to protect agricultural lands from urban and suburban development pressure
- Increases funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program to enhance and protect our natural resources
- Continues funding for Grassland Reserve and Wetlands Reserve programs
- Creates an Open Fields Program to encourage public access to private land for hunting and fishing as well as a Chesapeake Bay program to help restore and protect the Bay watershed

### Strengthening International Food Aid

- Provides \$60 million to purchase food overseas to feed people in need on top of the existing Food for Peace international aid program, along with an evaluation of this change and its effect on U.S. response times
- Reauthorizes the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program for infant, child, and school nutrition programs in underdeveloped countries and provides an infusion of \$84 million in additional funding

For a complete overview of the bill please visit: <http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/FarmBill.html>